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White, Horace

In response to the toast  
"The Netherlands...

[New York?]

[1912]

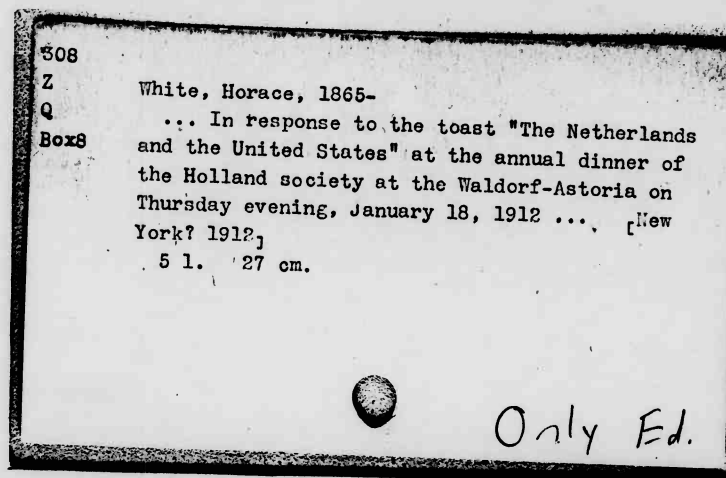
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In response to the toast "The Netherlands and The United States" at the annual dinner of The Holland Society at the Waldorf-Astoria on Thursday Evening, January 18, 1912, Horace White said:

In a simple crypt beneath the great church of Delft lie the remains of Hugo Grotius.

An unjust decree drove him at an early age to seek a refuge beyond the borders of the Dutch Republic. France and Sweden, recognizing his uncommon intellectual and moral power, in turn, rewarded and honored him. At times his heart yearned for the place of his birth, but the unrelenting hostility of Maurice of Orange and his followers deprived the country of his priceless service, and made him wander until the end; yet his last wish finally prevailed, to rest in his native land.

Two hundred and sixty-six years ago Grotius departed this life with little understanding of the value of his legacy to mankind. The immortal work on international law presented in enduring form the true principles of liberty and justice, cast a flood of light and reason over Europe, assailed the awful conditions caused by intolerance, tyranny, the doctrines of Machiavelli, and the Papal power, and for the first time opened wide the way for the peaceful settlement of strife among nations by arbitration.

At first the practical influence of his teaching was not generally apparent. Gustavus Adolphus profited by it. Richelieu yielded to it. The Peace of Westphalia gave it living force. Like Lincoln, and with the Great Emancipator's faith, Grotius made his appeal to thinking men. Naturally the forum of 1625 was not as receptive, not as thoughtful, not as enlightened, as the forum of 1861. The death sentence of Philip II, the judgment of life imprisonment pronounced in connection with the proceedings of the Synod of Dort, the proscription of the Church of Rome, all, had rested heavily upon him. Bravely borne as they were, his opportunities had been checked and crushed, his hearers had been blinded and prejudiced in advance; while a few faithful disciples spread and glorified his works. In defiance of notable converts to his principles, fanatical monarchs, merciless wars, hideous atrocities held sway for nearly a century.

Then a new era dawned upon a world of darkness, misery and wrong. Henceforth, history records all too frequent wars, with the attending losses and horrors, misrule and bigotry, crime and lawlessness have been slow to diminish and hard to suppress; yet there has been since the publication of *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* a steady movement toward peace and mercy. Conflicts have been fewer, and have been conducted, on sea and land, with less of unnecessary cruelty and devastation, and in a more humane spirit. Many threatening struggles have been avoided by diplomatic intercourse, and many far reaching differences have been settled by arbitration. There has been measured progress, culminating in the Peace Conferences at the Hague, and in the recent epoch-making treaties between the United States and England and France.

I believe that at this time thorough preparation and adequate equipment for war are the best means to preserve peace. I know no way but to fight hard when we must fight. But let us face the truth. War antagonizes every tenet of Divine Revelation. War causes suffering and waste, therefore, it violates the laws of nature. War is based upon the theory that might makes right, and is consequently at variance with the canons of civilized society. Dig deep enough, and you will find that the real moving cause of war is always bad. It is the result of unholy ambition, passion and prejudice. It means the reign of force, as opposed to the reign of law. It declares the triumph of ignorance and unreason. We submit to a tribunal of our fellow men, property rights, precious earthly relations and human life. What is there, then, in an international controversy that is not susceptible of like adjustment? Why should the state reject a procedure which has never failed to subserve the welfare, progress, liberty and honor

of the individual—a procedure which, if scrupulously, invariably observed, would relieve humanity from all the suffering, all the loss, all the stupendous outlay involved in war; nay more, would save the fabulous expense for pensions, armament and preparedness? Between these alternatives there can be eventually but one choice. The time will surely come when the hearts and minds of men will achieve the amicable arrangement of all differences between nations. Physical courage excites admiration. Moral courage excites reverence. A higher courage, a truer honor, a nobler patriotism are required for the faithful adherence to arbitration than for the appeal to arms.

If the Netherlands had contributed no other benefaction to mankind than Grotius and his works, that offering alone would have secured lasting fame, and an exalted place in the sisterhood of states.

The Netherlands and the United States have much in common, both in history and purpose. Each wrested independence from a powerful empire after a protracted struggle; each forged in the fires of that struggle a chain of inseparable parts; each in her time became a refuge for the oppressed, and the home of freedom, tolerance and good will. From her trials, and as the outcome of her heroism, each country reared a great man,—soldier, statesman, ruler—William the Silent, and George Washington. You are American citizens. You know no other allegiance. You follow no other flag. But your hearts kindle with happiness, your breasts fill with pride, as you contemplate the glory of your ancestral home, the true grandeur of the Netherlands.



The sentiment for Holland, which dwells within you, is allied with a still closer deeper tie. One is the feeling of a common inheritance: the other the bond of paternity and patriotism. This broad land of ours, with its boundless resources and wealth, with its mighty citizenship and institutions, with its marvelous activity and achievements, needs at this hour all the faith and foresight that made Grotius an eternal benefactor, needs all the stability and power that made William of Orange a foremost character of all time. For, as I observe the conditions and the course of events in America to-day, and reflect upon our perils as a nation, the conviction takes strong hold, that the real danger to our institutions is not corruption, is not industrial conditions, is not predatory wealth, is not a conflict between classes or races, but is rather the tendency of the people, the press, and public officials judicial, executive and legislative, high and low, to be temporarily swept from the moorings of justice, reason, conscience and law, by the popular passion or the sentiment of the hour. It is the peculiar peril of republics, illustrated by the history of Holland, as well as the annals of free states in the ancient and the medieval world, to suffer from the transports of blind feeling which sometimes seize the minds of their citizens. Servants of the people are often made aware of the fluctuations of public favor under the impulse of unreasoning emotion. It should be the office of liberal institutions to train the judgment of the citizen, school him in self-restraint and arm him against appeals addressed to prejudice and discontent. We Americans have set before us the hope of creating a political structure in whose just proportions man's immemorial aspirations for liberty, law and order will at last be realized. To attain this hope, we must insist on the practice of reason and justice by the individual in opinion, conduct and

speech. Those who would destroy our confidence in existing institutions, our faith in tried policies and rectitude, who would have us discredit in public affairs the fidelity to principle and integrity which we delight to honor in the other relations of life, should be regarded as enemies of the state, as men who would put far off the realization of humanity's hopes and prayers. We have splendid opportunities before us, for our generation and for posterity, if we can exercise national and personal self-control. Our foreign troubles and domestic ills can surely be honorably adjusted and corrected, if we can but have faith in the common sense and right mindedness of mankind, and discern and withstand the motives, the selfish efforts of sensational journals, charlatans and demagogues.

America and Holland have attested their community of principle and sentiment by doing homage to the same illustrious names; and the thoughts of Americans turn with natural reverence to him who so exhibited in action and in literature the ideas of justice and tolerance which have helped to make these nations great. At the Peace Conference, on the 4th day of July, 1899, our Government laid on the tomb of Grotius a fair silver wreath. As was there well said: "It combines the oak, symbolical of civic virtue, with the laurel, symbolical of victory,"—"and it encloses two shields, one bearing the arms of the House of Orange and of the Netherlands, the other bearing the arms of the United States of America; and both these shields are bound closely together. They represent the gratitude of our country, one of the youngest among the nations of the earth, to this old and honored Commonwealth; gratitude for great service in days gone by; gratitude for recent courtesies and kindnesses; and above all, they represent, to all time, a union of hearts and minds, in both lands, for peace between the nations."

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